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Regular federal disaster housing aid resumes for state's Katrina registrants

Camp Murray – Federal rental payments will continue for about 200 Hurricane Katrina disaster aid registrants in Washington under Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) rules that start May 1, according to the Washington Emergency Management Division of the Washington Military Department.

"The new rules will end the emergency housing program funded by FEMA and administered by the state through local housing authorities," said Kurt Hardin, state coordinating officer for the Katrina disaster assistance program. "About 100 recipients will become ineligible for further housing assistance financed by federal disaster programs.

"Overall, 5,000 to 6,000 persons have come to Washington from the hurricane-battered Gulf Coast and registered for federal disaster aid... Many have been able to establish themselves in the state through the efforts of government, non-profit charitable organizations and family and friends. But a small percentage of hurricane evacuees in Washington still face challenges such as medical conditions, affordable housing, and the lack of transportation and available jobs," Hardin said.

During the past eight months, the state has worked with local housing authorities to place 325 evacuees in interim disaster housing, and the state's clearinghouse handled several thousand calls to help evacuees with housing, deposit and utility funds, medical care, clothes, furniture, vehicles, identification papers, employment, recovery of vital documents and financial accounts, and funeral expenses.

"While more work remains to be done, the persistent efforts by the government agencies and private and non-profit organizations have enabled many of the evacuees to begin their recovery from the devastating losses of last year's hurricanes," Hardin said.

Hurricane evacuees will receive letters during the next month to explain their continued eligibility for federal disaster assistance and to outline their options for housing and for possible appeals of federal aid eligibility decisions, he said.

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